

over the next 2 years has made a critical difference to support State services, to be able to invest in cleaning up the environment, to save and create jobs. I've posted a guide on my Web site to each and every one of those provisions—62 pages in all—where people can track for themselves. There are not, for example, tax increases for most Americans. My friend from North Carolina is just flat wrong. If she would research the bill that we approved here on the floor, she would find that in fact 95 percent of the people get tax cuts. Nobody is having tax increases over the next couple of years, even the very wealthy. And it's what, in fact, America has asked for.

I would suggest that it's time for us to step back from some of this goofy back and forth because I think there are a wide range of areas that we can agree that reform needs to be made.

I like what I heard from President Obama on the campaign trail and what I heard from the rostrum here when the President addressed his first joint session of Congress. There are a number of areas of health, energy, tax, and agriculture that actually can bring people together. Now is not the time for commissions and study groups or for mindless political bickering; now is the time to actually do what we know we can accomplish.

There are multiple areas where it isn't so much picking low-hanging fruit, it's actually picking that fruit up off the ground. We need to articulate a vision of how we're going to accomplish that. For example, in the area of agriculture, it's not just the problem in the past that rich sugar farmers have had more clout than poor hungry children. There are ways in reforming agriculture that we can put more money in the pocket of more ranchers and farmers and less into the pockets of the wealthy few who don't need it.

We can implement reforms to help change the bureaucracy with things like crop insurance reform, that independent observers have identified for years, but Congress hasn't had the will to follow through on fixing it. We can pay farmers and ranchers to protect the environment, not to damage it. We can concentrate on strengthening American agriculture and producing more healthy food rather than a few commodities, frankly, that the world has enough of.

In the area of health, the research is in. There are a number of communities across the country that are low cost, high performing where people live longer and get sick less often. In fact, we see some of the areas of the country where we are spending the most government money in Medicare actually is not helping people. Rather, many of those areas actually have worse results because people get unnecessary tests and procedures, not concentrating on things that will make them healthy. We can reward the low-cost, high-performing areas while we send signals to those that are spending lots of money

and not performing very well. Let's send the message there's a bipartisan consensus that we're going to fix that.

In the area of transportation, there is a vast coalition that has emerged around the country that wants to help the Federal Government get more money and streamline the Federal partnership. They are willing to work with us so that there are more choices, higher standards, and sustainable revenue. The Chamber of Commerce, organized labor, environmentalists, transit advocate bicyclists, all combine in an approach to make America's transportation partnership with State and local governments better and stronger.

We don't need to rely on the same old patterns. We can, in this Congress, take action that unite people all across the spectrum all across the country. We've got a President who can use the bully pulpit. I strongly urge that we work with him for a new vision, more value, better choices for Americans, and to do it now.

2009 OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the omnibus spending bill is not an example of change here in Congress and continues the Democrat's spending spree in the first 2 months of the 111th Congress. Even a record \$1.4 trillion budget deficit has not stopped Congress' culture of spending on special projects. While families and business owners are cutting back and bringing their budgets under control, Congress, under Democrat leadership, is spending and earmarking as if nothing has changed.

Here are a few highlights of the bill that is being debated in the Senate right now. There is an 8 percent discretionary spending hike. After passing an unprecedented massive spending bill that is the largest this country has ever seen, the Democrat leadership ushered through this House an omnibus bill that will give a staggering 80 percent increase to discretionary programs when coupled with a \$1 trillion stimulus package. This bill will contribute to a permanent \$2,000 per household tax hike for every household. It contains 9,300 special funding requests, projects that cost nearly \$13 billion. Now, the argument is made that Members have a right to make these special district funding requests, but I, for one, would gladly place a moratorium on all district funding requests until the economy is corrected.

Let me say again, this omnibus spending bill increases discretionary spending by 8 percent when less than 3 weeks ago Congress and the President, under Democratic leadership, ran through a massive stimulus package where the same discretionary programs received much of the unprecedented \$1.1 trillion in government spending.

Now, counting those funds, this omnibus spending bill will institute an 80

percent spending increase for those programs in 2009 from \$378 billion to \$680 billion. This spending increase by the Democratic Party is unprecedented in American history.

The domestic spending programs which the omnibus focuses on have not been cut in the past decade; in fact, they have only increased from 2001 through 2008. These programs grew 23 percent faster than inflation, including increases for education at 35 percent, health research at 37 percent, and veterans benefits at 54 percent. It is apparent that during these fiscally challenging times these programs could have survived without some of these large increases.

Regrettably, the omnibus bill does not offset this new spending. It does not attempt to cut spending or institute reductions in inefficient or duplicate or worthless government programs. And let me just give you further example, Mr. Speaker, where some savings could be made; \$55 billion in annual program overpayments, \$60 billion for corporate welfare, \$123 billion for programs for which government auditors can find no evidence of success; \$140 billion in potential budget savings identified in the CBO Budget Options document.

Program duplication: There are 342 economic development programs; 134 programs serving the disabled, they're all duplicate; 130 programs serving at-risk youth, these are duplicate; and there's 90 duplicate early childhood development programs.

□ 1045

While some of these programs may be important, I find it hard to believe that each of the 342 economic development programs paid for by the American taxpayer, each and every one is vital to the American people. This has been identified, all these programs that duplicate.

Unfortunately, taxpayers should not expect change in the future. The administration and the Democrat party have already signed into law a large expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, putting middle class children who already have private health insurance on taxpayer-funded, government-run health care programs; weakened the 1996 welfare reforms in the \$1.1 trillion stimulus package; and instituted permanent government growth in the areas of education, infrastructure and Medicaid.

Last year, President Bush signed an executive order stating that Federal agencies must ignore earmarks that appear in nonbinding conference reports and instead implement only those in the bill text itself. That executive order currently remains in effect. President Obama, who campaigned on ending politics as usual in Washington, could strike a blow to the earmark culture in Congress by simply leaving this executive order in place. Doing so would eliminate all earmarks that Congress has not incorporated by reference

into the omnibus bill text. He should go one step further and veto any omnibus bill that explicitly has earmarks.

In the past six months, Congress has enacted a \$700 billion financial bailout and a \$1.1 trillion stimulus. I say it is time to end the culture of pork, and stop spending money that our children will have to pay back in the future.

SOLVING AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 15 years we have a real chance to solve America's health care crisis. The stars are aligning as has never been seen before. The American people want a solution, American business needs a solution to stay competitive and retain their best employees, segments of the health care industry, such as doctors, want a solution, and the President and the Congress have started a dialogue. Yet despite all those positive signs, we must not make the mistake of believing a solution is at hand or that it will come easily.

As a nation we stand at a crossroads, either sweeping reform or sweeping this crisis under the rug with another Band-Aid. We have to translate the national dialogue into legislation that makes access to affordable health care coverage what it must be in a free and Democratic society, a right and not a privilege.

There are lot of pieces to that puzzle and some are more readily solved more than others. In fact, I think some early victories might help instill confidence in the American people. Let me give you an example.

When I graduated from medical school, I was \$500 in debt after my entire medical education. Today, the average medical student is well over \$100,000 in debt. When you are underwater by that much money, you are forced to make decisions based on debt service, not on public service. Across America, from inner-cities to rural communities, we are woefully short of primary doctors. And as long as new doctors have to chase high paying jobs to pay off their debt, we are going to remain short staffed in these underserved areas in our country.

Today I am introducing legislation that would offer scholarships that would pay for most all of tuition for medical students in public colleges if they will apply their medical training in underserved areas when they graduate; an even exchange, one year of tuition for one year of service.

The American Medical Association says there were 45,000 students enrolled last year in public medical colleges and the mean cost of tuition was \$20,000. For a total investment of less than \$1 billion per year, my legislation would provide a workforce so that every American can have access to affordable

health care wherever they live. The scholarships would be accessible to a medical student enrolled full time and in good academic standing at a public institution.

Imagine the positive impact that we would have if we empowered new doctors to serve their country and the highest ideals of their profession instead of serving their debt load. It is important to make the financial commitment at the beginning of medical school so that students can study areas that are related to primary care.

Anyone who knows me knows I have long advocated a universal health care system, providing a minimum set of benefits for everyone. But we cannot get universal coverage or any interim step on the way to universal coverage without addressing, and reducing, the cost of health care education for our doctors.

We could make a significant impact by lowering the cost of the health care workforce if my bill were accepted. But we would do something else. There are a lot of talented young people who don't have the financial means to go to medical school and fear a crushing debt burden even if they qualify. By removing that mountain of debt, we could use that rock to build a foundation for a permanent solution.

We can solve America's health care problem and we can do it before the end of this year, but this is a first step that must happen. We must think about the workforce that will provide that universal access to everyone in the country. We cannot continue with the present funding of health care education and expect that we are going to have the people to provide the primary care, to do the wellness care, to do the prevention. They will all go into high-paid specialties to pay off their debt.

This bill is a step that we must take, and it is one where we can make a step forward for all the people in this country.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 50 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BLUMENAUER) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Today we bless You and praise You Lord for friends. Friendship is a gift, Lord, freely given by one person to another. Not merited, not purchased,

never manipulated, never demanded, friendship is uncovered in mutual self-revelation and common exchange. Desirous of the comfort found in another's companionship and tested by time, friendship spontaneously grows from within.

Friends truly know who we are. Friends stand with each other in good times and in bad times. True friends tell the truth without ever hurting. We steer friends away from what is wrong and seek only what is good for their friends.

Lord, strengthen Members of Congress with friends who will prove faithful no matter what transpires. Give them friends who will support them when they are right in spite of pressure from others and who will correct them when they are wrong no matter who agrees with them.

A friend may not change your taste, your reading, or your opinion, but a true friend will change what you long for and what you love. As different as they are from each other, true friends will accept each other as they are and share their differences—until they simply enjoy being together.

Lord, for lasting friends of the past, those we hold in friendship now and those we are yet to meet, we thank You, both now and forever. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. FOXX led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed concurrent resolutions of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 4. Concurrent resolution calling on the President and the allies of the United States to raise the case of Robert Levinson with officials of the Government of Iran at every level and opportunity, and urging officials of the Government of Iran to fulfill their promises of assistance to the family of Robert Levinson and to share information on the investigation into the disappearance of Robert Levinson with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

S. Con. Res. 10. Concurrent resolution congratulating the Sailors of the United States Submarine Force upon the completion of